

DISEASES OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM. By Sir Francis Walshe, M.D., D.Sc., F.R.S.
Ninth Edition. (Pp. 390; figs. 89. 30s.) Edinburgh and London: E. & S. Livingstone, 1958.

THIS monograph has now attained its ninth edition in the space of eighteen years, a fact which leaves one in no doubt of its popularity. As in previous editions, the book is divided into two parts. The first is an admirably brief and lucid account of the principles of neurological diagnosis, and the second describes the more common diseases of the nervous system.

The arrangement of chapters in this second part follows the traditionally descriptive pattern of disease which served neurology so well at the beginning of the century but which, in the light of recent knowledge, might well be modified to take greater account of the localization of lesions in the nervous system and the causation of disease. For example, the chapter entitled "Muscular Atrophies" includes several diverse conditions such as muscular dystrophy, motor neurone disease and acroparasthesia, while polioneuritis and poliomyelitis are described elsewhere. However, the author's awareness of the need of some change is shown by the recasting of the chapter entitled in previous editions "Subacute Combined Degeneration of the Cord" under the heading of "Manifestations of Vitamin B12 Deficiency," but it is odd that the manifestation of vitamin B1 deficiency have not been gathered together in the same way; Wernicke's encephalopathy is barely mentioned, and in the account of alcoholic neuritis no reference is made to thiamin.

The borderland between general medicine and neurology receives more attention than in previous editions. There is a new chapter on the neurological complications of liver disease, but more space might have been devoted to other metabolic diseases, such as diabetes, which present with neurological symptoms. The management of the comatose patient is a common therapeutic problem, but advice on this point is hard to find, for it is scattered throughout the book, and at times archaic (camphor is the sole recommendation for a suitable stimulant, and no mention is made of the lateral decubitus position). The dangers of neostigmin overdose in the treatment of myasthenia gravis are ignored. The value of positive pressure respiration in respiratory failure receives no attention; admittedly in a book intended for practitioners and students elaborate details are not required, but some mention of them is essential to maintain the balance.

Despite these criticisms, the reviewer is convinced that this book still remains the best of its kind and that it has many virtues to commend it to the non-specialized reader, in particular the thoughtful style, the clarity of description, and the advice on the management of disabled persons, so representative as they are of the author. We are glad to see too that this edition, unlike the earlier editions, contains a section of psychologically determined illnesses, such as anxiety neurosis, hysteria, and the "traumatic" neurosis.

J. H. E.

TEXTBOOK OF OBSTETRICS. By John F. Cunningham. Third Edition. (Pp. x + 506; figs. 297. 40s.) London: William Heinemann Ltd.

THIS is a most interesting textbook and has much to commend it. It is impossible to tell how popular it is in the school of its origin (Dublin), but it is difficult to envisage it displacing any of the better known textbooks in use in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

As the author himself states in his preface, he teaches according to the ethics of Roman Catholicism, and it will be of interest to many to see what very little difference there is in teaching between this and many another standard textbook.

In any future edition, however, one would hope for further revision. The chapter on the hæmorrhages of pregnancy diverges in places rather markedly from thought and teaching in other centres. Placenta prævia has in most centres lost its place high on the list amongst the causes of maternal mortality, and the wisdom of teaching Braxton Hicks' half-breech compression and vaginal tamponade as methods of treatment might be questioned.

The quality of the illustrations varies throughout the book and an effort to bring them all to a uniformly high standard would, one feels, be well worth while.

G. H. B. L.